

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-15 are pending in this application and are amended. Claims 1, 6, 7, 11, and 12 are independent. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Drawings

Applicants have not received a Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review, Form PTO-948, confirming approval of the formal drawings filed with the present application. It is respectfully submitted that the drawings comply with the requirements of the USPTO. Clarification with the next Official communication is respectfully requested.

Information Disclosure Statement

The Examiner has not acknowledged receipt of the Information Disclosure Statement filed April 14, 2003, and returned an initial copy of the Form PTO-1449. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the Information Disclosure Statement be considered and that an initialed copy of the Form PTO-1449 be sent with the next Official communication.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102/ Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1-6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,651,671 to Pedersen. Claims 11 and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,355,104 to Polster. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claims 7-10 and 13-15 are allowed. Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter. While not conceding the appropriateness of the rejections, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 1 is amended to recite an apparatus for a dipping treatment having a combination of elements, including a conveyor disposed above a treatment bath for dipping that is designed to cause a workpiece conveyed by the conveyor to be immersed in and emerge from the treatment bath for dipping, wherein the workpiece is supported above the conveyor through a carrier, and the carrier is swung through an angle of approximately 180 degrees through the treatment bath for dipping in a plane that is substantially perpendicular to a direction of travel of the conveyor to cause

the workpiece to be immersed in and emerge from the treatment bath for dipping.

Independent claim 6 is amended to recite a dipping treatment method for a workpiece provided above a treatment bath for dipping, conveyed by a conveyor and immersed and emerge from the treatment bath having a combination of steps, including supporting and moving a workpiece above the conveyor through a carrier, stopping the carrier above a treatment bath, and swinging the carrier through an angle of approximately 180 degrees through the treatment bath for dipping in a plane that is substantially perpendicular to a direction of travel of the conveyor to cause the workpiece to be immersed and to emerge from the treatment bath for dipping.

Independent claim 11 is amended to recite an apparatus for treating and conveying different kinds of workpieces in a mixed condition to a treating section having a combination of elements, wherein the apparatus is provided with a corresponding exclusive treating section having dipping baths on each side of a conveyor for each different kind of workpiece, and the apparatus is adapted to allow the workpiece on the conveyor to be horizontally rotated through an angle of approximately 180

degrees selectively to the right or left side in a direction of travel corresponding to the treating conditions so as to treat the workpiece at either the right or left exclusive treating sections or to pass the workpiece without rotating horizontally when treating conditions are not suitable for either of the exclusive treating sections.

Independent claim 12 is amended to recite a dipping treatment method for different kinds of workpieces in a mixed condition having a combination of steps, including supporting different kind of workpieces above a conveyor, moving the workpieces on the conveyor to a treatment bath, stopping a workpiece above the treatment bath; and rotating the workpiece on the conveyor through an angle of approximately 180 degrees selectively either to the right or left side substantially perpendicular to a direction of travel of the conveyor to treat each workpiece in accordance with the treating condition.

It is respectfully submitted that the combinations of elements and steps set forth in independent claims 1, 6, 11, and 12 are not anticipated or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Pedersen and Post.

In contrast to Applicants' claimed invention, Pedersen discloses a slide staining apparatus 1 which sequentially conveys specimen bearing slides S into and out of a staining solutions, as shown in FIG. 1. However, the slides S in the configuration of Pedersen are lowered on merely one side of rod 7, and cannot be swung through an angle of approximately 180 degrees through the staining solution because the rod 7 and jars 10-12 hinder such a movement. Accordingly, Pedersen does not teach or suggest a carrier that is swung through an angle of approximately 180 degrees through the treatment bath for dipping in a plane that is substantially perpendicular to a direction of travel of the conveyor to cause the workpiece to be immersed in and emerge from the treatment bath for dipping, as set forth in claim 1. Moreover, Pedersen does not teach or suggest swinging the carrier through an angle of approximately 180 degrees through the treatment bath for dipping in a plane that is substantially perpendicular to a direction of travel of the conveyor to cause the workpiece to be immersed and to emerge from the treatment bath for dipping, as set forth in claim 6.

Polster discloses an article treating apparatus which includes a lift assembly 40 that supports a support arm 50 that

lowers and raises articles to be treated into a treatment bath chamber 21 containing treatment liquid 22, as shown in FIG. 1. Although a treatment bath chamber 21 in Polster is provided on both sides of the lift assembly 40, articles cannot be swung through an angle of approximately 180 degrees through the treatment liquid 22 because the walls of each treatment bath chamber 21 would hinder such a movement, and the lift assembly 40 does not appear to be configured to swing through an angle of approximately 180 degrees. Polster does not teach or suggest a workpiece on a conveyor to be horizontally rotated through an angle of approximately 180 degrees selectively to the right or left side in a direction of travel corresponding to the treating conditions so as to treat the workpiece at either the right or left exclusive treating sections, as set forth in claim 11. Moreover, Polster does not teach or suggest rotating the workpiece on the conveyor through an angle of approximately 180 degrees selectively either to the right or left side substantially perpendicular to a direction of travel of the conveyor to treat each workpiece in accordance with the treating condition, as set forth in claim 12.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that Pedersen and Polster fail to anticipate or render obvious the presently claimed invention, and withdrawal of the rejections based thereon is respectfully requested. Independent claims 1, 6, 11, and 12 are in condition for allowance. Since the remaining claims depend directly or indirectly from allowable independent claims, they are also allowable for at least the same reasons as set forth above, as well as for the additional limitations provided by these claims. Accordingly, all claims should be allowable.

CONCLUSION

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

The stated ground of rejection has been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance. Applicants, therefore, respectfully request that the

Examiner reconsider the presently outstanding objection and rejection and that they be withdrawn.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, she is invited to telephone Sam Bhattacharya, Reg. No. 48,107, at 703-205-8000.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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